

# GETTING TO KNOW THE JAMAICAN CANADIAN ASSOCIATION



**working together, growing together**



*The Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA) strives to improve the general welfare of Toronto's Black and Caribbean community by addressing the community's rapidly expanding and diverse social service needs. In pursuit of these goals, the Association provides key leadership and advocacy in such vital areas as education, housing, employment, immigration, social services and law and order.*

*The JCA works to facilitate the smooth economic, social and cultural integration into Canadian society of the Black and Caribbean community. To that end, the JCA provides numerous opportunities for social interaction amongs its own membership as well as with members of the wider community.*

*The Jamaican Canadian Association is an incorporated non-profit organization and is a registered charity. Adherence to its objectives are the criteria for membership. The organization is governed by an elected volunteer board. Its day-to-day operations are co-ordinated by an Executive Director and there are staff members who provide the various social services.*

*Its main head quarters are at 1621 Dupont Street. The organization has also established locations in the Jane Finch and the Lawrence Heights Communities in order to provide local services.*

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JCA's first home at 65 Dawes Road. Photo by Danny Gooding 1972.

## A BIT OF HISTORY

When Toronto's Jamaican Canadian community came together in 1962 to celebrate Jamaica's newly won independence, few suspected that this auspicious occasion would inspire the founding of an organization that would become the bedrock for Toronto's Black and Caribbean community. But this is exactly what happened! Success went far beyond initial expectations in generating interest and inspiring a committment from members of the

community to establish a permanent body that could serve as a rallying point for the community.

A committee of 10 was drafted and they worked to develop the constitution that would lay the groundwork for the Jamaican Canadian Association's (JCA) three decade of dedicated service to Toronto's Black and Caribbean community.

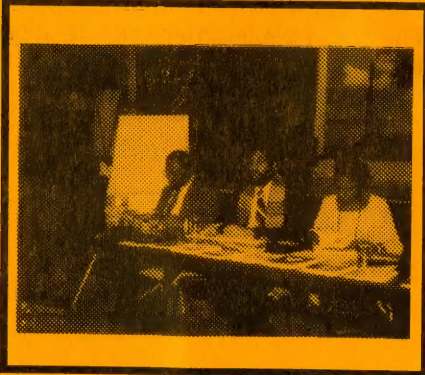
## THE EARLY DAYS

The Association had its first meetings in the old YMCA building at Bay and College. Subsequent to that, the JCA rented a place behind Royal York Hotel on Wellington Street. A short while thereafter, the organization shared offices with an African student's organization on Colbourne Street.

In 1971 the JCA was able to purchase a building on Dawes Road which came to serve as a crossroads for most of Toronto's Black community. Tragically, this building was destroyed by fire. After the fire, the organization met in offices on O'Connor. JCA then rented

some office space at Pape Avenue, later Danforth Avenue and finally Dufferin and Eglinton. It was at Danforth that they hired full time staff for the first time.

In July of 1985, after long and arduous planning, the Association was finally able to purchase another building- its present location at 1621 Dupont Street. **This JCA centre has once again become a focal point for Toronto's Black and Caribbean community and has become the site of local "happenings" such as plays, cultural shows, dances, weddings and community meetings.**



African-American Educator Jawanza Kunjufu at the JCA Centre.



Task force hearing on Policing held at the JCA Centre.



JCA's Annual Black History celebration.



# YEARS OF SERVICE

## THE 1960's - Tumultuous Time

The 1960s were tumultuous times and the newly founded JCA was immediately immersed in such matters as getting new arrivals settled, getting human rights laws enforced - especially fair housing and employment laws - and in simply creating opportunities for Jamaican-Canadians and other Caribbean people to socialize. JCA was instrumental in getting Ontario's decision to accept Caribbean Teachers' Credentials and in generating concern for the type of education that Black children were receiving. It is fair to say that during this decade the Association played a major role in the struggle to get fair and equal treatment of Blacks and other "visible minorities" by the various institutions such as the police, the government and private businesses.

## THE 1980's An Era of Institutionalization

The 1980's were an era of institutionalization for the JCA. During this period, the JCA's provision of youth and family counselling was formally cemented as the Caribbean Youth Program, now the Caribbean Youth and Family Services. JCA also launched a Black big brother/big sister program known as the Pal Program and formed a youth wing of the Association known as the Caribbean Canadian Youth Association. In addition, the Association established an Immigrant Settlement & Adaptation Program.

The Association once again turned a longstanding dream into reality with the purchase of a new home on 1621 Dupont Street. This building quickly became a cornerstone in the Black community with a host of community activities taking place at this location. The Association's vital role and the importance of the building quickly became evident in 1988 when Jamaica was devastated by Hurricane Gilbert. Not only did the Association play a major role in the organization of the relief effort but the building played a major role as relief headquarters.

The Association also submitted a report to Clare Lewis's task force on Policing and the Black Community and played a major role in reducing tensions between the police and the community, including the organizing of a conference specifically for that purpose. Parenting was also a major concern of the JCA during the late 1980's and they organized workshops as well as a conference on effective parenting.

## THE 1970's - The Education Years

These years could be characterized as education years because of the significant focus that the Jamaican Canadian Association placed on the educational needs of Black and Caribbean people and the variety of actions that the JCA undertook. JCA launched several initiatives including their After-School Program, the Booster Program, the Caribbean Outreach Program, the Parent Education Group and the Saturday Morning Arts and Crafts Program.

During these years the JCA also sponsored symposiums; for instance, on the education of Black children and on Black Unity. The Association presented a paper to the committee reviewing the Ontario Human Rights Act and submitted a brief to the Maloney Commission which triggered a Globe and Mail exposure of cases of police brutality. JCA also presented a brief to the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism with reference to problems faced by Jamaicans in Canadian society.

JCA's long years of lobbying for a consulate in Toronto also finally paid off with the establishment of a consulate.

Undoubtedly a major JCA achievement during these years was the acquisition of their first building at 65 Dawes Road in 1971. This building burnt down about a year later in what was a major disappointment. Despite this terrible loss, the membership's spirits were kept high through the good works of the Women's Auxilliary Group. These JCA women organized several on-going events to keep up the morale and to continue the struggle.

## THE 1990's A Time For Innovative Approaches

The 1990's are exciting times for the JCA as it enters an era of transition for all Canadians with the implementation of Free Trade, the resolution of the Meech Lake Accord, the continuing technological revolution. Demands on the JCA are immense because of the on-going need for innovative solutions to the problem of drugs, parenting, unemployment, and police-community relations. The JCA is well poised to maintain a strong presence on the front lines with its provision of culturally sensitive social services as well as with its vision of a strong Black community participating fully in the multi-cultural mosaic-working together, growing together.

# RESPONDING TO NEEDS

## THE EVOLUTION OF A SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDER

As time went by, the organization's members realized the need for regular and culturally appropriate services to the Black and Caribbean community. The ever increasing demands for assistance from individuals as well as from mainstream agencies compelled the association to strive to provide services on a permanent basis.

Over the years, the JCA has developed and instituted an Immigrant and Settlement Program, a Cultural Enrichment Program, a Cultural Arts Project, Summer Programs, the Pal Program, The Afrocentric Achievement Society, Multicultural Networking and a Caribbean Youth and Family Services.

Thus, the Jamaican Canadian Association has evolved from an association motivated by the independence of Jamaica to one that is fully immersed in addressing contemporary issues facing the Black community and the entire country. The Association has consistently sought to maximize the community's potential. It is with the greatest amount of pride that the organization is able to point to the continuing involvement of most of the founding members in the JCA's undaunted efforts to serve the Black and Caribbean community.



Members who make the JCA the institution that it is.

## INCENTIVES FOR ACTION: THEN AND NOW

Several pressing issues compelled members of the Jamaican-Canadian community to form the Association in 1962. The JCA played a major role in making these issues public concerns and they are still at the top of Toronto's Black community's agenda today. Major concerns included:

1. **Housing** - Most newly arrived West Indians had difficulty securing accommodation because of discrimination.

2. **Loneliness/Alienation** - The typical Caribbean immigrant was susceptible to a deep feeling of loneliness in the absence of institutions serving the West Indian community. There were no recreational alternatives, organizations or facilities specifically oriented to meet the needs of Black and Caribbean citizens.

3. **Immigrant Settlement** Another typical situation which the Jamaican-Canadian community felt needed to be addressed was the lack of proper legal representation for newly arrived immigrants detained at the airport. Once released there was little help provided to help these new immigrants get settled.

4. **Employment** - Finding employment was a serious concern for newly arrived immigrants because their motivation for migrating to Canada was based largely on a desire for greater economic opportunity. On arrival, most West Indians and Blacks found themselves faced with a variety of occupational barriers in fields other than domestic work and low-skilled manual labour.

## TAKING THE INITIATIVE

These problems were only a few of the the most pressing issues that concerned the founding members of the Jamaican Canadian Association. In its early days, the Association addressed these issues by providing a friendly face and much needed support for newcomers.

JCA members actually went out to the airport to meet incoming immigrants from the Caribbean. Often JCA staff would have to hastily raise the \$1000.00 bond that was needed to release new arrivals who had been detained.

Before long the JCA found itself playing a major role in fighting for creation of Ontario's Human Rights Legislation. Employment and housing were of particular concern along with police-community relations.

The organization prepared several briefs for the various boards of inquiry concerned with police-community relationships. In fact, the JCA was one of the first advocates of a Civilian Review Board - a position that was reiterated in February 1989 when the Association presented a report to the Task Force on Policing and Race Relations.



JCA President Miah Bailey presents donation to the Armenian Centre, Apkar Mirakian for hurricane relief.



## AREAS OF ACTIVITY

### PREVENTATIVE AND SUPPORTIVE COUNSELLING:

The JCA provides preventative and supportive counselling to young people and their families. The Association strives to assist young people primarily through:

- (i) the Caribbean Youth and Family Services Program at Jane and Finch, 2065 Finch Avenue, Downsview, M3N 2V7.
- (ii) the outreach worker in the Lawrence Heights Area
- (iii) the efforts of the staff at the head office at 1621 Dupont Street.

### LIFE ENRICHMENT

The Association provides leadership development sessions, life skill training and educational and cultural support programs to enhance the opportunities and personal lives of the community's youth. Towards this end, the JCA.

- (1) Provides employment opportunities for high school students with interest in camp leadership through their W.O.W. (Work orientation Workshop) Summer programs in the Jane Finch and Lawrence Heights communities
- (2) Blends arts and crafts and history, with recreational activities in its various locations.

### MULTICULTURAL NETWORKING

The Associations works constantly to strengthen ties between the Black and Caribbean Community and other communities. To realize their goal, the JCA

- (i) Publishes a newsletter every 6 weeks
- (ii) Provides personnel and resources for various seminars and workshops
- (iii) Liases with various broad-based community organizations such as The Black Secretariat, The Black Community Planning Committee for the United Way, The Black Action Defense Committee.

### SCHOOL SUPPORT

JCA workers respond to requests from various schools to intervene in crisis and to help with ongoing problem. The Association provides culturally sensitive mediators whenever necessary. The JCA also

- (1) provides information to both parents and students in order to encourage their participation in the school system and enhance the benefits they derive from the system.
- (2) helps school to understand the culturally specific needs of the Black and Caribbean children through workshops with both staff and students.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE INTERACTION

The Association consistently hosts a variety of annual activities to provide opportunities for social interaction among its own members and the wider community. These include:

- (1) Annual brunches
- (2) Walk-a-thons
- (3) Children Christmas party

- (4) Annual Black History Month celebration
- (5) New Year's Eve Dance
- (6) Annual Eva Smith Bursary
- (7) Annual Metro Caravan
- (8) Jamaican Independence
- (9) Annual Bus Trip
- (10) Annual Picnic

In addition, the Association makes a significant effort to support other charitable efforts such as the United Way Fund-Raising Campaign.

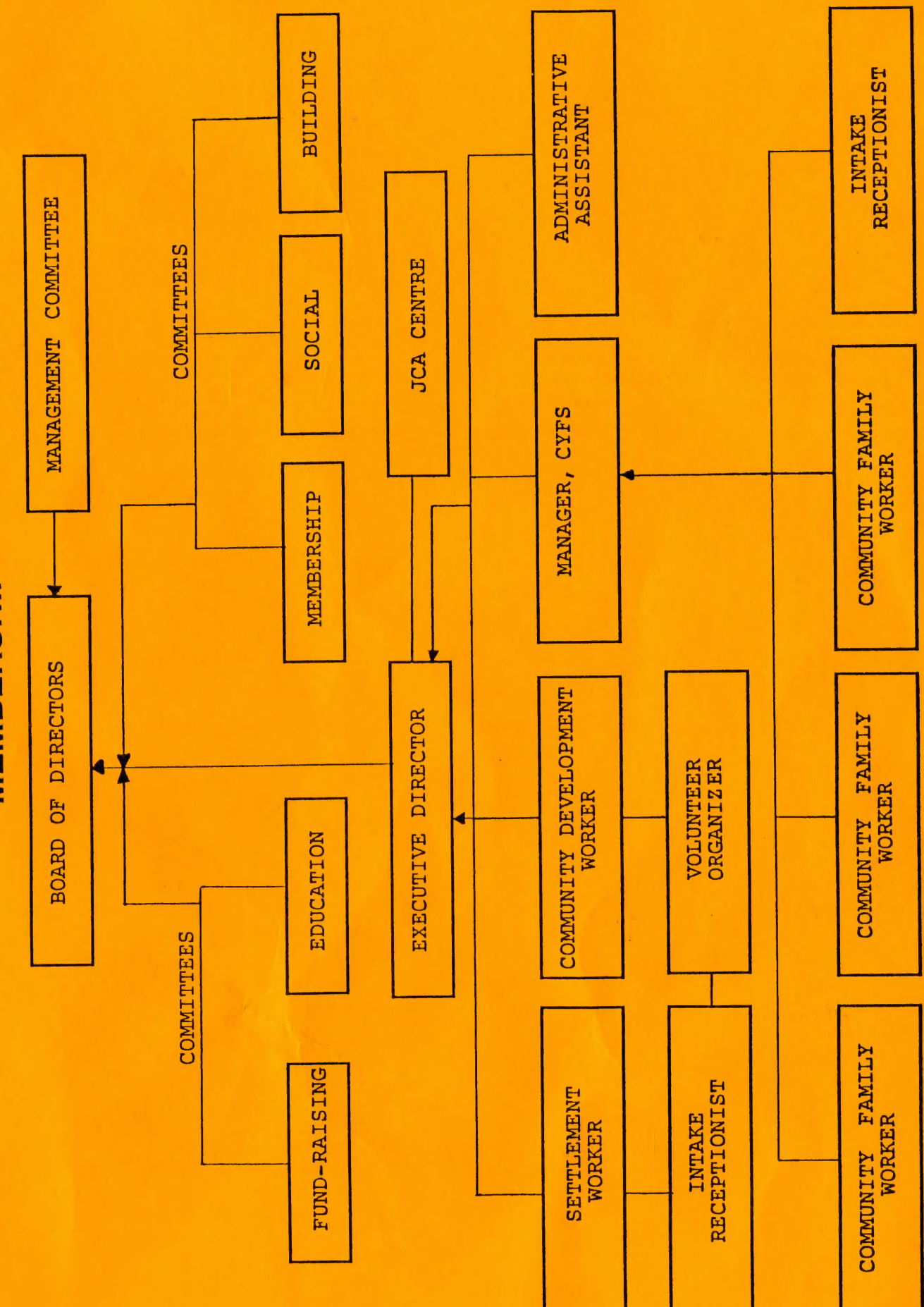
The Association also has a credit union which attempts to serve the financial needs of its members.

### OUR FUNDERS (ALPHABETICALLY)

- (1) Employment and Immigration Canada
- (2) Jackman Foundation
- (3) Members - Through Regular Fundraising Activities -
- (4) Bingo, Walk-a-thon, etc.
- (5) Metro Social Services
- (6) Ministry of Citizenship
- (6) Ministry Of Community and Social Services
- (7) Secretary of State - Multiculturalism
- (8) United Way of Greater Toronto

## JAMAICAN CANADIAN ASSOCIATION ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

### MEMBERSHIP







**JAMAICAN CANADIAN  
ASSOCIATION**



**United Way**

**A member of The United Way  
of Greater Toronto**